

WORDS OF LIFE
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TRADING

*Or the Possession and Exercise
of Spiritual Gifts.*

Matt. 25:14-30.

Charles E. Dodge

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After Reading Loan to Others.

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TRADING

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The disciples of Christ are *traders*. This is emphatically true of those who have a special call to preach the gospel, whether in home or foreign lands.

In Matt. 25:14, 15, we read that the kingdom of heaven "is as when a man, going into another country, called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one; to each according to his several ability; and he went on his journey."

The man referred to in this text is Christ. He took his departure into "another country" when "He ascended on high." He "called his own servants" together the week following, having previously "charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father." On the day of Pentecost He "delivered unto them His goods," i. e., spiritual gifts. "He gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some pastors and teachers." For confirmation, see Acts 1:4, 5; 2:1-4; Eph. 4:7, 8, 11.

"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power" (Acts 10:38), and He introduced a dispensational ministry. The Spirit was given Him "not by measure." John 3:34. Thus possessing "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9), He was the embodiment of all spiritual gifts and powers, these finding their perfection of quality and exercise in Him. "Through the eternal Spirit" He "offered Himself without spot to God (Heb. 9:14), and "by the Spirit of God" He "cast out demons." (Matt. 12:28.) He was at once the great "apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher: wisdom, knowledge, miracles, healings, government, helps" were complete in Him. These gifts were His "talents"—the "goods" which the Father had delivered unto Him. He "*traded*" with them with great "profit" to the glory of God and the blessing and saving of mankind.

Some may challenge the assertion that this divine, superhuman character of ministry is to be continued through the Church, during the entire gospel dispensation, in the absence of its Head, but we believe the New Testament teaching sustains this view.

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There is one very important difference, however, between the "fulness of the Spirit" in Christ and in us, the "members of His body." In Him, it was absolute, in us it is relative. The Spirit is given to us by "measure." (Eph. 4:7.) No one "member" possesses all he possessed, but the whole "body," if in a healthy condition, may, we believe, be the channel for the continued outflow of "all the fulness" of the Head.

In the bestowment of spiritual gifts the Spirit divideth unto "each one severally even as He will" and "to each one is given the manifestation (or gift) of the Spirit to "profit withal" (or trade with). (1 Cor. 12:11, 7.) The man in the parable who received the "five talents" evidently represents those whom the "manifestation of the Spirit" qualifies to become "apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists, and pastors"; the one with the "two talents," those who receive through the Spirit, "miracles, gifts of healings, government, tongues," etc.; the man with "one talent" only, those who are thereby qualified to be "helps."

There is always some "manifestation of the Spirit" in everyone who

has been "baptized in one Spirit into one body." All, therefore, have at least "one talent." These "spiritual gifts" are the "goods" which our Lord has "delivered unto us, and are also called the Lord's money" (vs. 18). The Lord knows we must have spiritual currency with which to do spiritual business, and He has given it to us, to the intent we may "trade therewith" and "profit withal." We "trade" for Him and "profit" for Him, but if we are faithful, as we learn from the parable, when the reckoning day comes He will make us permanent stewards of all we have received and gained. See also Luke 19:11-27.

The man with the "one talent" who "digged in the earth and hid his Lord's money" aptly represents those Christians who are always saying, "I can't." This is a dangerous thing to do if the parable has a literal application, for this man seems in the end to have lost not only his "talent," but his soul.

Beloved saints, we can do business for God on a scale commensurate with the amount of capital our Lord has "delivered" unto us and the amount of diligence we put with it. This is the more true because the "Head of the Church" always bestows upon us such

supernatural gifts as will harmonize with our natural abilities. (See vs. 15.) Paul wrote Timothy to "stir up the gift" that was in him (2 Tim. 1:6). Those with large capital may be able to do a successful business without much assistance from others, but those with small capital are exhorted to "put it to the bankers"—that is, mingle their "gifts" with those of others, so that a company, if not the individual alone, may be able to do a successful business for God, and that the Lord, when He comes, may "receive back His own with interest" (vs. 27).

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